

Community Affairs, were designed to enable more rapid understanding and adoption of the state's new (2006) waterfront property act provisions, including local planning mandates, new permit and fee considerations for marinas, and involvement of communities in the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program.

And in Maine, agencies such as the Department of Marine Resources and the Land for Maine's Future Program, have produced and delivered a host of public educational and informational products, all meant to successfully launch the state's new working waterfront protection efforts.

Ideas conveyed in this final report of the N.C. Waterfront Access Study Committee (WASC) may help to exemplify the potential for such public educational programs to address the issue at hand in innovative ways. For example, the Committee has mentioned and recommended present use valuation and conditional zoning approaches as potential means to retain/enhance working waterfront uses or public access. According to the staff of the N.C. Coastal Resources Law, Planning and Policy Center, an innovative combination of these two approaches might serve well in the North Carolina context. If present use value classification is extended to working waterfronts, further legal research, followed by presentation and discussion of such a combined approach at educational workshops for local planners, planning commission members and other officials, could result in an approach to working waterfront retention and enhancement that could not only be applied in North Carolina coastal community settings, but also potentially provide a national model.

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly, contingent upon the level of its response to the recommendations in this report, endorse and financially support educational outreach programs to improve retention and enhancement of working waterfronts and public access to coastal waters. Such programs should be designed to assist local coastal communities in understanding and adopting tax-incentive, planning, zoning, and cost sharing approaches. To accomplish this aim, grants or contracts could be awarded to public programs or nonprofit organizations having a coastal resource focus and public educational outreach mission. Awards should be based upon the capacity of those organizations to identify community educational needs and ability to deliver quality, cost-effective outreach programs. Whenever and wherever possible, the resources and expertise existing within the University of North Carolina system should be brought to bear in this endeavor.

Further Study and Oversight

Among all the facts, positions and opinions presented at full business meetings and at the three public comments meetings convened by the Committee, there was an overwhelming sense that time and timing were the most critical factors in the State's response to the loss of waterfront use diversity along — and public access to — coastal public trust waters. From expressions of appreciation to the General Assembly and to our Committee for taking up the issue and task, to laments of loss of the State's coastal heritage, to pleas for State resolve, assistance and investment, to demands that a wide variety of access for water-dependent business and recreational pursuits be secured, it seemed that the one underlying postscript to every statement could easily have been "but we must act soon!"